

3/1/2021

Written testimony in support of HB-6355; submitted via email

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am from Bloomfield and a supporter of CT Against Gun Violence. I am a resident and voter of Connecticut concerned about gun safety.

Connecticut was the first state in the nation to pass an Extreme Risk Protection Order law, in 1999. ERPO offers a means of last resort to temporarily remove firearms from individuals judged to be at risk of imminent harm to themselves or others. It has been shown to prevent firearm suicide and stop mass shootings.

I agree with CAGV that it is time to strengthen the law so that it works harder to prevent gun violence. In particular, when the protection order expires, it should be a requirement that the subject is no longer at risk of violence before the firearms are returned. That is not the case now.

Additionally, those persons and entities who may petition the court for a risk protection order should be expanded to allow family, household or medical professionals to do so. Of the states that followed CT in instituting risk protection orders, 12 states have included a wider scope of petitioners.

Opponents of the bill claim that ERPOs lack due process protections and are abused by family members. Neither of these is true. The process that is used is virtually the same as the one used for issuing domestic violence restraining orders. Further, the subject is entitled to a court hearing, presided over by a Judge, before the order is extended beyond 14 days. There is no evidence that the process is used to harass gun owners; judges are required to have clear and convincing evidence to issue final risk protection orders.

I ask that you favorably report HB-6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection law so that it works harder to prevent firearm suicide and homicide. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joan E. Twiggs
Bloomfield, CT 06002